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## Another CIA Blooper

Although it happened under the directorship of Allen Dulles back in the Eisenhower administration, the Central Intelligence Agency once more has been the source of American embarrassment and humiliation.

There can be no doubt that the CIA is a vital government operation. There is every reason to believe that, on the working "level," the CIA is the equal of any intelligence organization in the world, with brave, dedicated and intelligent operatives.

But with the U2 incident, the Bay of Pigs and the now resurrected Singapore episode, the confidence of the American people in the administrative level of the CIA is badly shaken.

IT IS ALMOST incredible that anyone in the CIA — even the director himself — would have been presumptuous enough to offer a \$3-million bribe to a foreign government to cover up the blunder of one of its agents.

Such an action so obviously is a policy matter involving the integrity and honor of the United States that a decision of this sort should have been made only by the President and the Cabinet, or the National Security Council—which apparently was not the case.

It is equally hard to believe that when the State Department made inquiry of the CIA when Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew made his charge this week, the intelligence agency blandly denied that any

such thing had ever happened — thereby setting up State, and the nation, for Prime Minister Lee's humiliating denunciation.

THERE REMAINS the puzzling question of why Lee, formerly very friendly to the U.S., should have dug up this four-year-old incident at this time.

Far Eastern experts venture the theory that, since the break in the Malaysian Federation, Singapore feels it has to "get right" with Red China, even if it does not sever its ancient ties with Britain. The bribery attempt was a handy instrument for this purpose.

And certainly Prime Minister Lee went out of his way to make it plain that if Britain withdrew from Singapore, the United States would not be welcome as a substitute.

ALL IN ALL, this whole affair has been a costly one for the U.S.

Knowing President Johnson's low boiling point, we have no doubt that Adm. William F. Raborn, now the CIA director, has received about the stiffest orders of his career to see to it that his agency keeps its cotton-pickin' fingers out of national policy, or episodes which can affect national policy.

That can be all to the good. But meantime our national stature has assuredly been diminished, particularly in Asia where we need friends, by the reckless and ill-conceived Singapore affair.